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**EVPL's *Our Summer: Play Your Way*
Summer Reading Celebration Announced**

Kickoff celebrations planned for Wednesday, May 29

Evansville, Indiana – Each summer, thousands of readers participate in EVPL's summer reading celebration. This year's theme, **Our Summer: Play Your Way**, invites people to read, create, connect, and enjoy activities simply for the fun of doing so.

The program will begin May 29 with kickoff celebrations at four EVPL locations: EVPL Central from 10 a.m. – noon, EVPL East or EVPL Oaklyn from 2-4 p.m., and EVPL Red Bank from 5-7 p.m. However, those who wish to participate can sign up at any location that day, all the way through July 31, when the program ends.

"We chose the theme of play to encourage people of all ages to play more, to set aside time for enjoyable activities," said Erika Qualls Barnett, Programming Manager. "We often think of play as something children do, but play is just as important for older kids and adults. Life can be busy and stressful, and people of all ages need recreation. Play brings joy."

Qualls Barnett also noted that play means something different to everyone. "Play may mean playing games or sports for fun, doing arts or crafts, learning a new recipe or skill, playing an instrument, growing a garden, or, yes, getting lost in a great book. Whatever play means to you, we want you to do more of it this summer."

When someone signs up for **Our Summer: Play Your Way** at an EVPL location, they'll receive registration prizes, a bilingual logbook, and instructions. Participants can also participate digitally by registering and tracking books through EVPL's Beanstack app. Registrants will receive individual prizes at midpoint and completion (while supplies last) and can earn entries for one of several large prizes for each of the five age groups. Prize entries may also be earned by participating in library programs and other activities during the summer.

Reading is beneficial to people in every stage of life. For young children, reading helps develop early language skills and imagination, and it's also a special way to bond with caregivers. School-age children can build on the skills they learned during the school year, and research has shown that reading just 4-6 books over the summer can prevent a decline in reading scores from spring to fall. And for all ages, reading has been proven to increase empathy for others, as well as improve concentration and memory, reduce stress, and improve sleep.

"All reading counts!" said Qualls Barnett. "You can read on your own, read with someone else, listen to an audiobook, or read an e-book. Books can also be from your own collection or from the library."

More details about **Our Summer: Play Your Way** can be found at

evpl.org/OurSummer24

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